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ABSTRACT

Ways in which a playground may be used as an area for young children's education are described. Techniques for encouraging children to observe, explore, and investigate are pointed out, and the implications for future learning implicit in these skills are noted. (JD)

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Let's Explore Our Playground



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Acknowledgements

This unit for teachers is one of a group of seven written by teachers for use by teachers. The writing was done in two sessions at Kuring-gai C.A.E. during a North Sydney Region In-Service Course in 1977. All the teachers were involved in trying a sample of the ideas with their classes. Comments from teachers who have considered or tried the activities in these units would be appreciated and should be sent to the project co-ordinator:

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Let's Explore Our Playground

The function of this unit is to stimulate the child to have an increasing awareness of his/her immediate environment. The unit is intended to be an on-going theme throughout the Infants School for as short, or long a period as proves profitable.

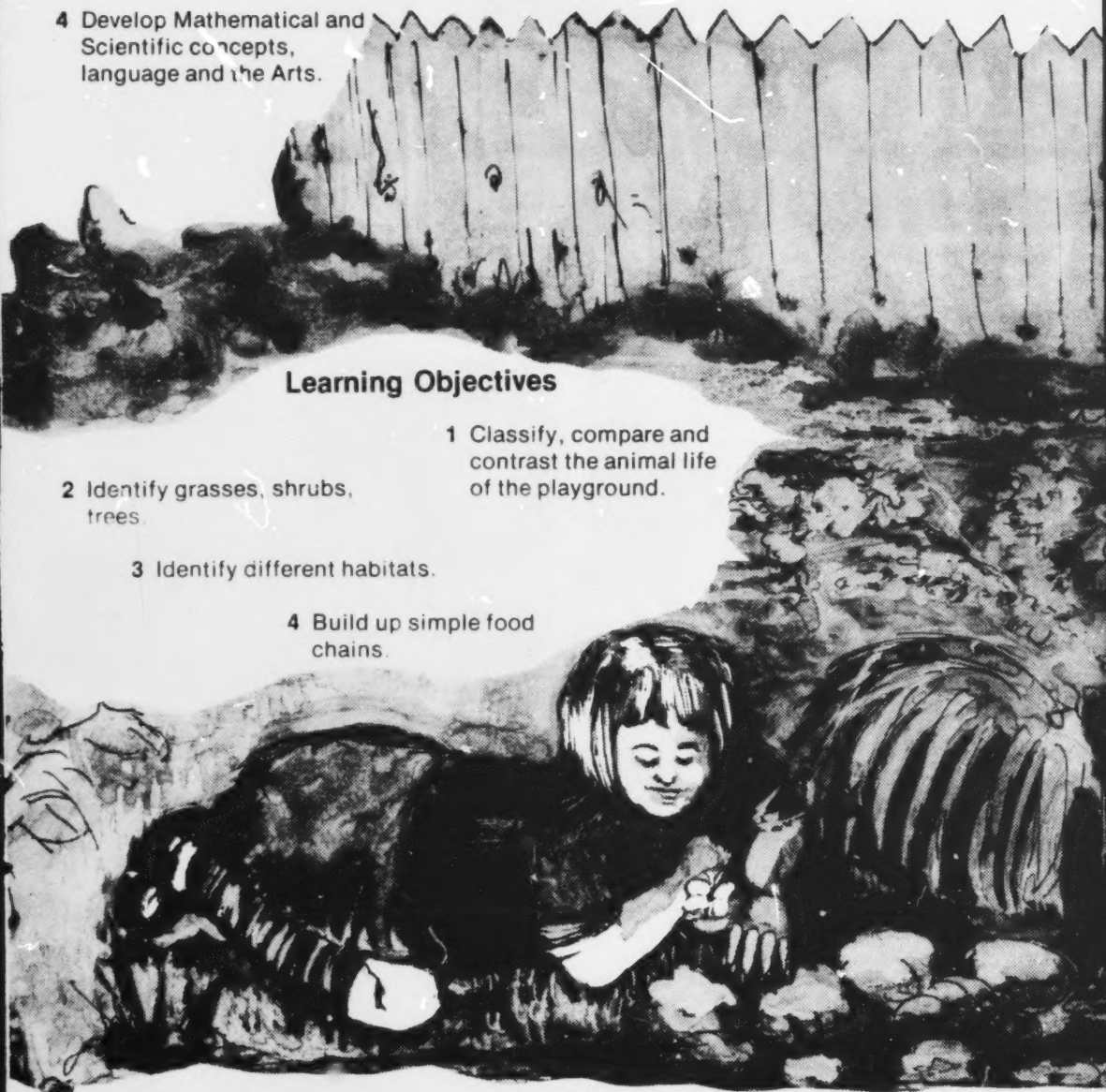


Specific Objectives

- 1 Investigate the playground environment at different levels and in many directions.
- 2 Use the senses to collect information.
- 3 Develop an interest in making and arranging collections.
- 4 Develop Mathematical and Scientific concepts, language and the Arts.

Learning Objectives

- 1 Classify, compare and contrast the animal life of the playground.
- 2 Identify grasses, shrubs, trees.
- 3 Identify different habitats.
- 4 Build up simple food chains.



Attitudes

This unit aims to develop the child's: —

1 Curiosity and interest to further explore in his/her own time.

2 Honesty in recording observations.

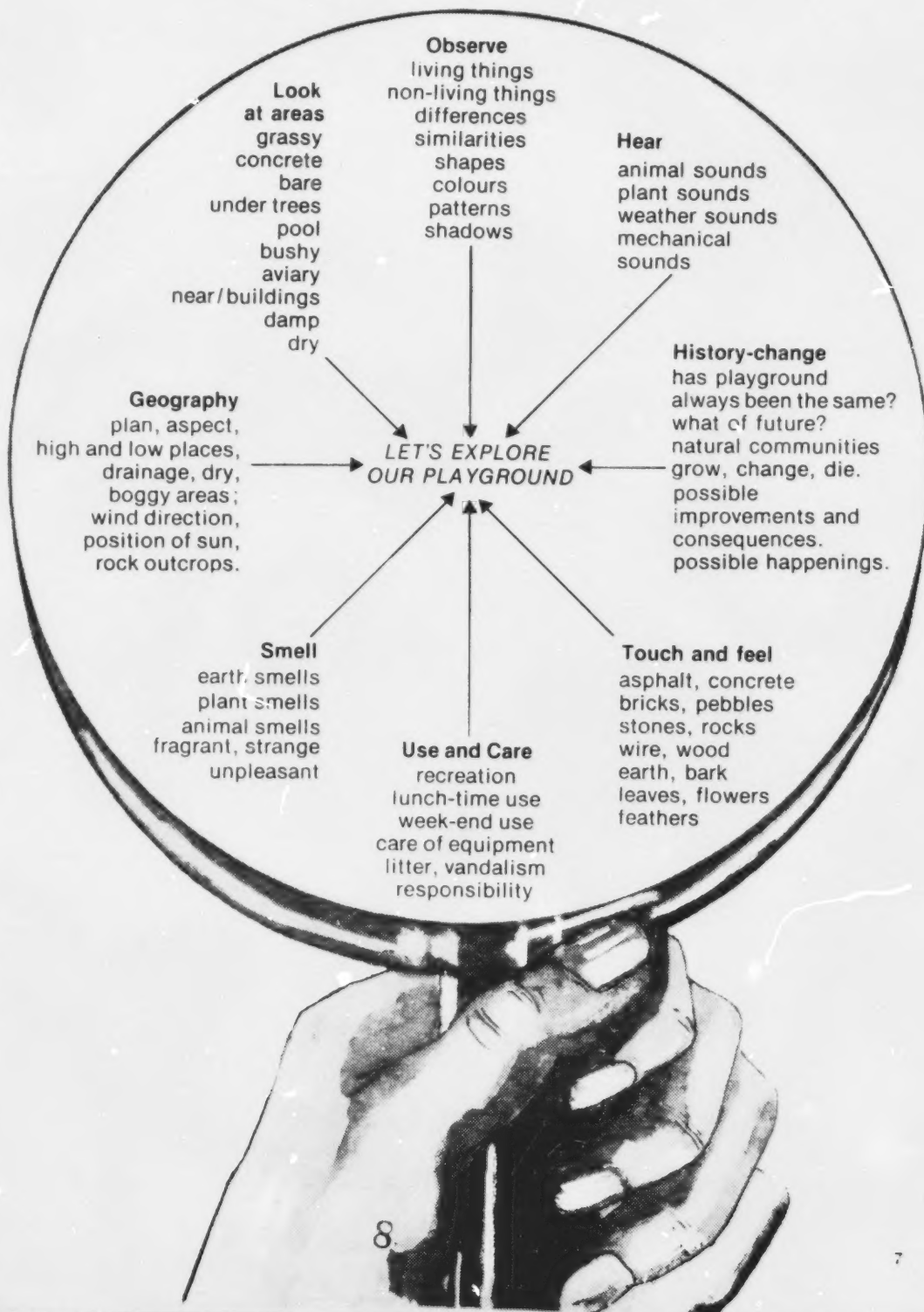


3 Consideration for other living things.

4 Responsibility for care and maintenance of the environment.

Scope of The Unit

Explorations to be at all levels, above, below, under and around.



Integrated Activities

Mathematics and Science

sort, classify, match,
order and measure
sets and attributes
time, shadows and
change
weather
maps and graphs
symmetry

Language

discussions and
talks —
individual, group and
class
vocabulary building
written expression
creative writing

Social Science

use care and
maintenance of the
playground
responsibility to the
school community
history and geography
of the school and
playground

Art and Craft

use environmental
material for collages,
wall charts, pictures,
making models,
dioramas
illustrations for class
books and stories
rubblings, printing and
painting
modelling with clay,
plasticene and
playdough

Music and Literature

stories, poems
and songs
relevant music

Excursions

visit — a local bush
area
other playgrounds

Drama and Creative Dance

simple role play
e.g. if I was an ant.
guessing games
e.g. what am I?
what am I smelling?
what sound is this?
imitation on tapes
of playground
sounds

LET'S EXPLORE OUR PLAYGROUND



Materials

ground sheets
plastic bags and
containers

hoops
ropes
metre squares

hand lenses
earth sieve
funnel

secateurs or scissors
(teacher only)

pencils and booklets
where appropriate

measuring sticks
and tapes

Introductory Activities

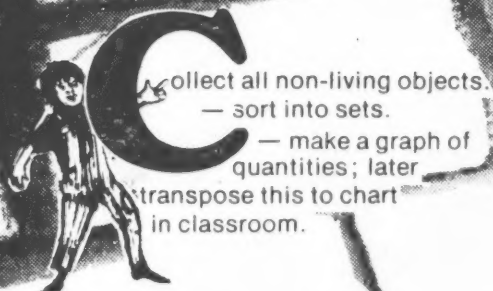
- 1 Look out of the window —
"What do you see?"
- 2 A walk in the playground; discussion
on how much, or, how little was
observed.
- 3 A sub-unit of the five senses to
sharpen the child's powers of
observation.
- 4 Use of a visual aid such as a picture
talk, film, filmstrips, or slides.



Activity 1

The Asphalt or Concrete Area

time: 1 week approximately



Collect all non-living objects.
— sort into sets.
— make a graph of quantities; later transpose this to chart in classroom.

- classify as bio-degradable or not.
- return to earthen area items such as leaves, twigs, grass, (even food scraps if buried) to make compost.

- dispose litter in garbage bin.
- discuss findings.
- discuss litter problem: whose responsibility?



Hunt for:
living things, but look and leave behind, except for plant samples.

- make a list of animals and habitats.
were there many?
(see chart)



Listen for:
sounds at all levels — natural and man-made.
— make tape recordings.

twig:



See page 8 for integrated activities.

Activity 2

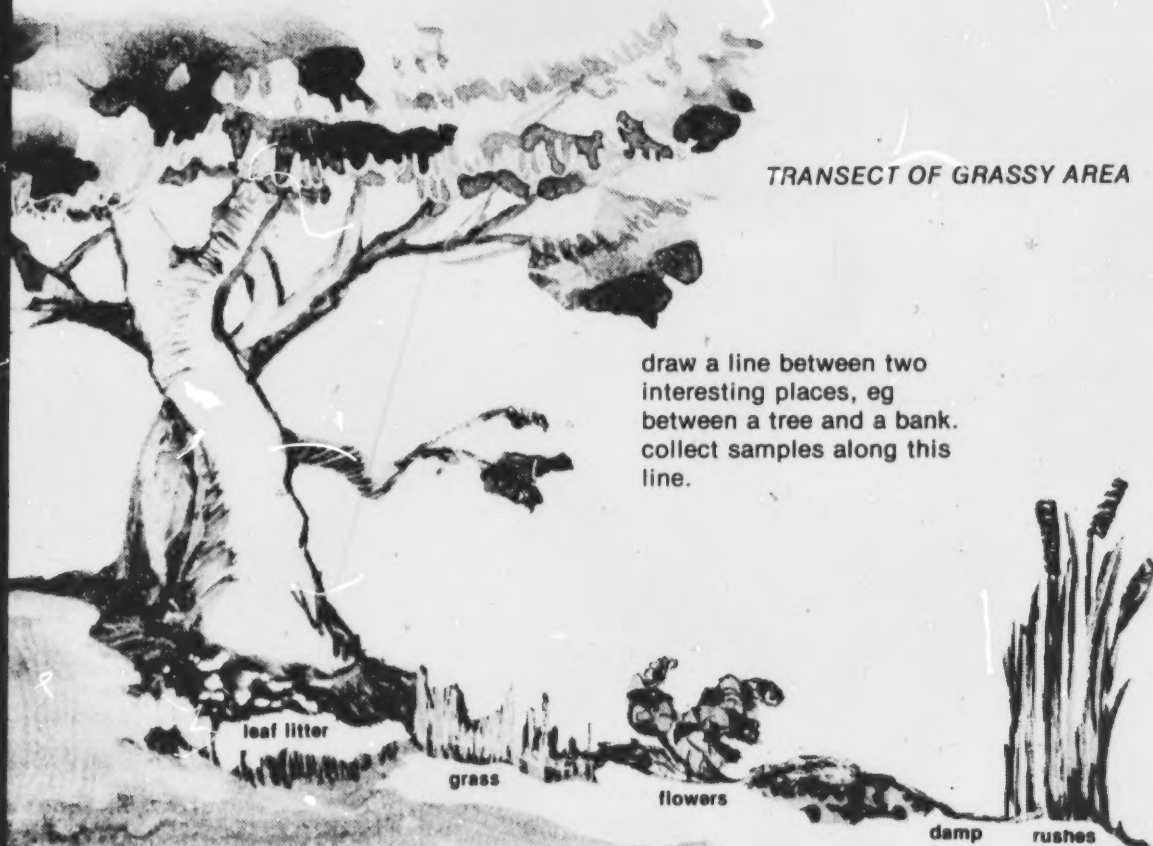
The Grassy Area



Look for:

- living and non-living things.
- notice different habitats and growth patterns.
- compare life styles and anatomy.
- observe specific areas by making transects, laying down hoops or measuring off metre squares.
- compare findings.
- remove small clod of grass and earth.
- investigate for content.

Listen, touch and smell as for concrete area.



draw a line between two interesting places, eg between a tree and a bank. collect samples along this line.

Activity 3

Trees and Leaf Litter

Look at:

- shape of trees, foliage, flowers, fruit, bark, root formation.

- whether deciduous, evergreen, coniferous trunks and make estimates and measurements of height and girth.



Look for:



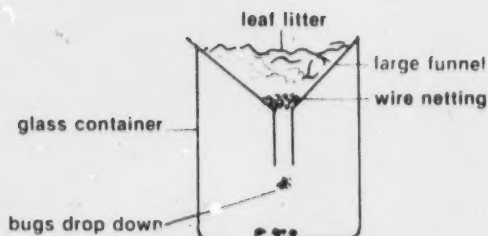
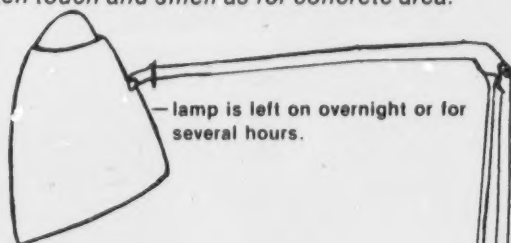
- minibeasts, birds, reptiles that have the tree for a home.
- how they protect themselves through camouflage and defence mechanisms.

- living things under the tree.
- life in the leaf litter.
- discover small creatures by using an earth sieve for this experiment.

- shadows and shadow patterns.
- reasons, if any, for positions of trees, and present usage by the school community.

Listen touch and smell as for concrete area.

EXPERIMENT WITH LEAF LITTER.



Activity 4

Water in The Playground

1 POOLS AND PUDDLES

Look

- at the skin of the water.
- down through the water.
- for reflections.
- for floating things.
- for animals and plants living on or in the water.



Watch

- for change in water level and investigate cause.
- what happens if water is polluted e.g. detergent added to puddle.





2 CREEKS
as before where
applicable

- explore bed of creek, mud, sand, pebbles, rocks, water weeds.
- note direction and flow of water.
 - note places where direction and flow changes.
 - why?
 - observe animals and plants in moving water.
- note differences and similarities.

*Listen, touch, smell and taste
(at teacher's discretion)*

Activity 5

Looking Upwards

- looking upwards for clouds, cloud cover, colour, shape, high or low, kinds of clouds, weather predictions.

- for movement of clouds, trees, birds, smoke, weather vanes, flags, washing, dust, aeroplanes, kites.

- for patterns and shapes.
- for rainbows.
- atmospheric pollution and bushfires.

- for affect of wind or activity and speed of movements in sky.
windless day no movement.

Listen, smell and feel

Activity 6

History and Change

look for:

- evidence of change.
- signs indicating former use of playground.
- remains of bush.
 - remains of orchards, former agricultural or horticultural use.
 - foundations or other evidence of old building sites, wells, etc.
 - domestic artifacts.

research history by consulting:

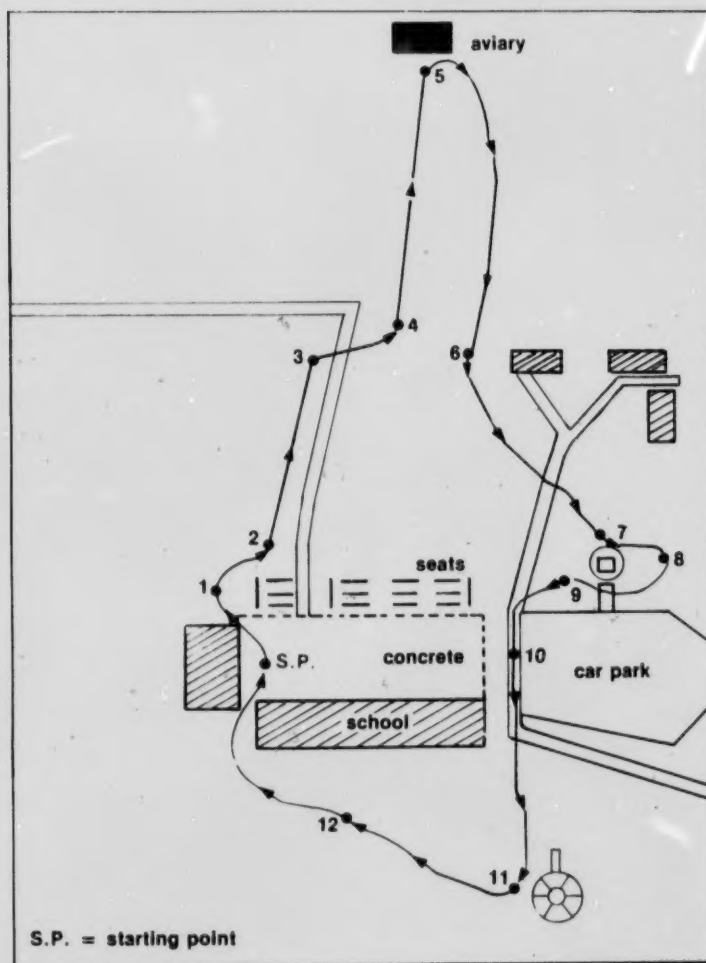
- home libraries.
- old church records.
- Land's Department library.
- parent knowledge.
- community residents.



Concluding Activities

- make a model of the playground.
- make dioramas depicting different areas.
- make a school shadow clock.
- act a play about the life of plants and animals found.
- create an ideal playground in any medium.
- establish a nature trail or "Use Your Senses" trail.

THE "USE YOUR SENSES" TRAIL



Examples of stops on the trail

- 2 Macinlamia Nut.
look up and see the nuts.
not ripe till they fall.
feel prickles on leaf edge.
- 8 Peppermint Gum.
smell one leaf crushed by your teacher.
- 12 Angophora.
look at the beautiful tree.
look and listen for birds.
feel smooth, rusty bark.
look for insects.

Resources

Books for Teachers and Children

SCIENCE 5/13

Early Investigations 1 & 2
Early Experiences
Early Exploration
Minibeast
Trees
Tackling Problems 1 & 2

MacDonald

Nuffield/Cedo

Mathematics,
The First Three Years

Chambers, Murray, Wiley

Science Experiences
Environmental Education
Field work
Teachers' Handbook
Series of Bird Booklets
Australian Nature Series
in Colour

Franklin Watts

Gould League N.S.W.
Gould League N.S.W.
Gould League Vic.

Reed

Mass, Nuri

Wonderland of Nature
Australian Wildflower Magic

Writers Press
Writers Press

MacDonald Starters
Course for Young Experimenters

MacDonald
Oak Tree Press

Schoenheimer & Winch

Silver in the Sunlight
I Can Touch the Sky

Jacaranda Press
Jacaranda Press

Audio Visual Media

Films

Catalogue of 16mm Films.
Burwood Teaching Resource Centre.
Focus on Self Development S.R.A.